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NOTES AND ABSTRACTS

ANTHROPOLOGY—PSYCHOLOGY—LEGAL—MEDICINE.

A Social Study of Mental Defectives in New Castle County, Delaware.—“No State has as yet made adequate provision for mental defectives. In considering how best to meet the need for increased care and protection it is coming to be recognized that the problem is a complex one which can not be solved by any one measure. The adequacy of the care and protection which can be given a mentally defective individual in his own home depends upon the economic circumstances and character of the family. Furthermore, mental defectives vary as to the kind of care and training and the amount of supervision needed. Public provision for the care and protection of mental defectives is urgently needed for two classes:

1. “Those who are delinquent, degenerate, or uncontrollable and thus constitute a menace to the home, school, and community.
2. “Those who are deprived of normal home life or whose families can not give them the necessary care and protection.

“The Children’s Bureau undertook an investigation in New Castle County, Del., for the purpose of securing social data in regard to the conditions under which mental defectives live, the problems involved in the lack of proper facilities for their care, and the extent of the need for public supervision and institutional provision. The Children’s Bureau made no examinations of mentality, but used as a basis for social investigations the results of mental examinations made available by the Public Health Service and diagnoses by other physicians competent to determine mentality. The investigation was begun in the fall of 1915, and the field work was completed in July, 1916.

“The only provision in Delaware for the care and training of mental defectives is the State fund for the maintenance of 14 Delaware children in the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-minded Children at Elwyn, Pa. An effort is being made to secure more adequate provision in the State.

“The population of Delaware according to the estimates of the Bureau of the Census for July 1, 1916,¹ was 213,380. New Castle County, the northern of the three counties of the State, had an estimated population of 131,670. The population of this county has increased very materially since 1910, owing to the unusual industrial conditions of the past two years. The county includes Wilmington, the only large city in the State, which, according to the census estimates for 1916, had a population of 94,265. There are a number of small towns in the county, the largest of them having a population of about 4,000. Seventy-four per cent of the population in 1910 was urban (living in cities of 2,500 or more). Part of the county is practically suburban to Wilmington or to Pennsylvania cities.

“The population of New Castle County, as well as of the State as a whole, is chiefly native white. In this county, according to the 1910 census, 74.2 per cent of the population were native white, 13.1 per cent were foreign-born white, and 12.7 per cent were colored. Within the last two or three years the popula-

¹Bureau of the Census Bulletin No. 133, p. 15.

tion of the county has become more heterogeneous through an influx of foreign laborers.

"New Castle County has large industrial establishments. Manufacturing is carried on in the smaller towns as well as in Wilmington. Agriculture, especially dairying, is an important occupation. Conditions in this county are very different from those prevailing in the southern part of the State, where the population is almost entirely rural and the raising of fruits and vegetables is the principal industry.

"In preparation for an intensive study of individual defectives a rapid survey was made of social agencies and institutions and general social conditions of the State. Information was secured in regard to existing resources for dealing with the problems of defect, dependency, and delinquency, including utilization of facilities of other States.

"A list of supposed mental defectives in New Castle County was secured through the co-operation of all institutions in the State having inmates who came from this county, social agencies of all kinds, public and parochial schools, county and State officials, workers dealing with problematic children, and private individuals in all parts of the county having special knowledge of conditions. Only persons in the county at the time of the investigation and those who were temporarily away from home but whose families lived in the county were included in the study. Inmates of institutions in New Castle County admitted from outside the county were not included.

"In order to determine which of the individuals reported were definitely defective, diagnoses were secured for as many of the cases as possible. The mental examinations of school children in New Castle County made by the United States Public Health Service materially aided in this.² These examinations covered all children in the schools of New Castle County outside of Wilmington and a selected list of Wilmington school children. A considerable number of mental defectives studied were or had been formerly inmates of the Delaware Hospital for the Insane, or had been under observation of hospitals and clinics in neighboring States and therefore had received adequate diagnosis. An additional number of cases had had physical and mental examinations by local physicians. Some cases were of such low-grade mentality that they could be classified as feeble-minded without mental examinations.

"Inmates of institutions for juvenile delinquents examined and found feeble-minded were included. It was impossible to present adequate data concerning inmates of institutions for dependents, since no mental examinations had been made. From the latter institutions, therefore, only a few cases which had been examined previously or which were unquestionably feeble-minded were included as positive cases. The recent provision for examination of delinquent children and of such dependent children as come before the Wilmington juvenile court will undoubtedly in time be extended to include all children of doubtful mentality in the care of agencies and institutions.

"The list of possible mental defectives secured from all sources was analyzed into three groups of cases:

1. "Positive cases of mental defect.
2. "Questionable cases.

²U. S. Public Health Service, Public Health Reports, vol. 31, No. 46, Nov. 17, 1916. Mental Status of Rural School Children, pp. 3174 ff.

3. "Cases dropped because probably not feeble-minded. Among these cases were 15 epileptics excluded from the positive or questionable cases because there was no evidence of mental deterioration.

"Positive cases" included those diagnosed as mentally defective by competent authority and those of so low a grade of mentality as not to require examination.

"Questionable cases," or cases of probable mental defect, included those of doubtful mentality who were not given mental examinations and those for whom positive diagnoses could have been made only after more prolonged observation than it was possible for the examining physician to give.

Individuals adjudged mentally defective through diagnoses or because they appeared to be obvious cases were followed further. Information was secured by means of investigation of home conditions supplemented by school records and by data secured from agencies and institutions and from individuals having particular knowledge of the cases studied. The points covered included economic status and character of the family; physical conditions and developmental history; personal characteristics; school history and attainments; occupational history and economic efficiency; social reactions, including delinquencies and other antisocial tendencies; and ability of the family to care for and safeguard the defective individual. Social data less extensive than those secured for the positive cases were obtained for cases of questionable mentality."

SUMMARY.

"A total of 175, or 82.5 per cent, of the cases studied were in need of public supervision or institutional care. Ninety-five of these were at large in the community in immediate need of special care and protection, 68 were in institutions not designed for their care, and 12 were provided for only temporarily in an institution for the feeble-minded.

"A study of individual cases of mental defectives reveals in a striking way the coincidence of mental defect and poverty, abnormal home conditions, neglect, and dependency. A majority of the mental defectives were found in an environment making normal standards of living impossible.

"Eighty-three, or 39 per cent of the total number, were living under adverse home conditions—extreme poverty, alcoholism, immorality, or entire lack of home protection. An additional 68, or 32 per cent, were in institutions not adapted to their needs, making a total of 71 per cent living under conditions where adequate care and protection were impossible or provided for only temporarily in institutions designed to care for other classes.

"That society must provide special protection for mental defectives is strongly indicated by the fact that 98 of the total number studied had delinquency records or were immoral or difficult to control. Seventy-nine of these were living under adverse conditions or in institutions not adapted to their needs, while 7 were in an institution for the feeble-minded, and 12 were living in good homes.

"The problem of those requiring special care and training because of subnormal mentality is not limited to the 212 positive cases of mental defect included in this study. The 361 individuals classified as of questionable mentality undoubtedly included a number who were actually mentally defective. All of them presented problems of retardation or abnormality. More than

one-third of the questionable cases for whom information as to individual characteristics was secured were known to be delinquent or uncontrollable. A total of two-thirds of those for whom detailed data were obtained were in homes where proper care and safeguarding were impossible, or had already developed antisocial tendencies.

"Delaware has an unusual opportunity to work out a well-rounded program of adequate provision for all classes of mental defectives. It is a small State, and, having no established system of care, is free to utilize to the fullest extent the experience of other States.

"Any program for adequate provision for mental defectives must have as its central feature institutional provision. The data gathered in this investigation furnish evidence as to the imperative need for institutional care and training for defective individuals who can not be given proper care, training, and protection in the community and for those who are a menace to the community by reason of delinquent tendencies. A large number of cases need permanent custodial care. But institutional care alone can not meet the whole problem of provision for mental defectives. The institution should serve as the focus for the various activities necessary for the proper care of the feeble-minded.

"Facilities for mental examination and diagnosis available to all sections of the State are essential and might be provided by a system of clinics held in various parts of the State at regular intervals by the institution psychiatrist, in co-operation with the schools and other existing agencies. The need for mental examinations is indicated by the fact that more than 1,100 persons in New Castle County were reported to the investigators as possibly feeble-minded. Facilities for mental examinations are particularly needed for proper treatment of delinquent and dependent children. They are requisite also for classification of children in the schools.

"An essential part of the improvement of the school system of Delaware is special provision for retarded children, taking into account the reason for their backwardness—bad physical condition, lack of opportunity, or actual mental defect. The State educational authorities have repeatedly called attention to the seriousness of the problem of retardation in the schools and the necessity for more adequate compulsory education laws and better school equipment. In towns where the school system is large enough to make it practicable special classes should be developed which would provide industrial training and other instruction adapted to the needs of those mentally defective children who can safely remain in the community and would make it unnecessary to remove them to an institution for training.

"The place of the special class in the program of public care for defective children has been demonstrated by the experience of a number of cities where such classes have for several years been part of the public-school system. Dr. George L. Wallace, superintendent of the Wrentham State School for the Feeble-minded, in a recent address,⁸ said:

"With the extension of this movement for special classes, until every school system of any size has a sufficient number to accomodate all children

⁸Annual Conference of Massachusetts Society for Mental Hygiene, Boston, Mass., Dec. 13-15, 1916. "The type of feeble-minded who can be cared for in the community." Published in *Ungraded*, vol. 2, No. 5 (February, 1917), p. 105, and, in part, in *Mental Hygiene*, vol. 1, No. 2 (April, 1917), p. 291.

with mental defect, it would seem that the larger number of children with ordinary mental defect could be safely protected and educated in the community.'

"It is coming to be recognized that the expense to the State of institutional provision can be much reduced and greater justice done to individuals by a system of parole of certain classes of mental defectives who have been trained in an institution and by supervision through an out-patient department of those defectives who can be given proper care and training in the community. Such out-patient work could be carried on in co-operation with the schools and other agencies coming in contact with the problem. This method of parole and supervision in the community of certain types of mental defectives is being advocated by some of those most experienced in the care of the feeble-minded. Mr. Alexander Johnson speaks of the importance of the practical movement for the after-care of certain classes of the feeble-minded who have been trained in the school.⁴ Dr. Wallace, in the eighth annual report⁵ of the Wrentham State School, says:

"Boys and girls whose mental and moral defectiveness is not extreme, who have profited by a period of institutional education and care, who have perhaps been tided over a few critical years of their life—these we are reasonably hopeful may do fairly well in the community provided we carry institutional provision to them in the form of a good visitor, while also having them report to the institution at certain periods. I believe this is one method whereby a school for the feeble-minded can extend its work and bring a larger number of feeble-minded under supervision than can be maintained within the institution grounds."

"The possibility of caring for mental defectives in the community is brought out in the recent report of the Indiana committee on mental defectives, which speaks of the 'value and far-reaching importance of community care.'⁶ The need for supervision in the community was emphasized at the last annual conference of the Massachusetts Society for Mental Hygiene. Dr. Walter E. Fernald, in an address on 'What is now practicable in the way of protection, education, supervision, and segregation of the feeble-minded,'⁷ said:

"There is now needed something between permanent segregation and no care. We may be able to distinguish between those who can go out into the community and those who must stay in an institution. * * * The ideal should be segregation for those who need it and supervision in the community for those suitable for community life."

"Defective individuals are found in all ranks of society and under all varieties of conditions; they become community problems when they develop antisocial tendencies or when they are without proper care or control because of poverty or detrimental home conditions. Without a system of mental examinations and supervision in the community the higher grade mental defectives are not usually recognized as such until they have become socially troublesome. A comprehensive program, including mental examinations, special

⁴"The feeble-minded," *The Survey*, vol. 37, p. 361 (Dec. 30, 1916).

⁵Wrentham (Mass.) State School, Eighth Annual Report, for the year ending Nov. 30, 1914, p. 15.

⁶Mental Defectives in Indiana. Report of Committee on Mental Defectives, Indianapolis, Ind., Nov. 10, 1916, p. 6.

⁷Annual Conference of Massachusetts Society for Mental Hygiene, Boston, Mass., Dec. 13-15, 1916. Paper as yet unpublished.

classes, and supervision in the community, as well as institutional provision, would result in the greatest benefit to the defective individual and to the community and would reduce the social burden of delinquency and degeneracy."—*Emma O. Lundberg*, From U. S. Dept. of Labor, Children's Bureau, Publication No. 24.

COURTS—LAWS.

Support of Destitute Families of Prisoners in Pennsylvania.—An Act authorizing cities of the first class to make appropriations for the support of destitute families of persons sentenced to imprisonment, and providing a system of control and administration for the distribution thereof.

Section 1. Be it enacted, &c., That cities of the first class may appropriate moneys for the maintenance and care of destitute families of persons sentenced in such city to imprisonment, whose families are, and were at the time of the conviction of such person, domiciled within such cities of the first class.

Section 2. The councils of such cities of the first class shall designate a department of the city government to have the control and disbursement of any such appropriation, and may provide such employees, and fix their salaries, as may be necessary to carry this act into effect.

Section 3. The family of any person, sentenced in such city to imprisonment, which is in destitute circumstances, may apply for assistance to the department having the disbursement of the appropriation. Upon the receipt of any such application, the persons in charge of this work shall investigate the facts of the case, taking into account the number of dependents in each case, and shall either refuse or allow such assistance as may be considered necessary.

Section 4. In all cases where assistance is allowed to any family, the same shall be paid by the city treasurer, upon the warrant of the department having the control of such appropriation, countersigned by the comptroller.

Section 5. In all cases where assistance is allowed to any destitute family, the person making such allowance shall take into consideration any moneys which may come into the possession of such family under the provisions of an act, approved the thirteenth day of June, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-three (Pamphlet Laws, one hundred and twelve), entitled "An act to abolish the contract system in the prisons and reformatory institutions of the State of Pennsylvania, and to regulate the wages of the inmates;" and of an act, approved the first day of June, one thousand nine hundred and fifteen (Pamphlet Law, six hundred and fifty-six), entitled "An act providing a system of employment and compensation for the inmates of the Eastern Penitentiary, Western Penitentiary, and Pennsylvania Industrial Reformatory at Huntingdon, and for such other correctional institutions as shall be hereafter established by the Commonwealth, and making an appropriation therefor;" and of an act, approved the fourth day of June, one thousand nine hundred and fifteen (Pamphlet Laws, eight hundred and twelve), entitled "An act authorizing and regulating the employment of convicts and prisoners on the public highways." (Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor of Pennsylvania, session of 1917).—*E. R. Keedy*, University of Pennsylvania.

Support of Child Born Out of Wedlock in Pennsylvania.—An act making it a misdemeanor for a parent wilfully to neglect to support a child born out of lawful wedlock, whether such child shall have been begotten or shall have been born within or without this Commonwealth; providing punishment there-